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NEWS RELEASE

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TRACT OF LAND WITHIN MARTIN'S FORK WILD RIVER WATERSHED DEDICATED AS STATE NATURAL AREA

Designation lends added protection from development

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 22, 2006) – A tract of land in the Martin's Fork wild river corridor has been dedicated as a state natural area by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission (KSNPC). The land – 1,601 acres owned by the Kentucky Division of Water – will have enhanced legal protection from development, including utility construction.

Martin's Fork of the Cumberland River is a high-quality mountain stream that originates in the higher elevations of Cumberland Gap National Historical Park in Bell County. A 3.9-mile segment was designated a Kentucky wild river in 1974.

The wild river segment, on Cumberland and Brush mountains in Harlan County, is a remote, mountainous area marked by sharp ridges and deep, narrow ravines. Nearly the entire area is forested, as is the upper watershed of Martin's Fork. The land supports a wide range of animal species and at least nine plant species rare in Kentucky – Brook saxifrage, Rock harlequin, Crinkled hair-grass, Steele's joe-pye weed, Variable-leaved heart-leaf, Appalachian sandwort, Silverling, Curtis' goldenrod, and Painted trillium.

The Division of Water Wild Rivers Program acquired 1,601 acres with funding provided by the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund. Information about the Wild Rivers Program is available by mail (Division of Water, ATTN: Morgan Jones, 14 Reilly Rd., Frankfort, Ky. 40601), telephone (502-564-3410 x 520) or Web (www.water.ky.gov/sw/wildrivers).

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Dedication of the new state natural area took place at the KSNPC meeting on March 8. Information about the Commission and its mission to protect Kentucky's natural heritage can be obtained by mail (KSNPC, 801 Schenkel Lane, Frankfort, Ky. 40601-1403), telephone (502-573-2886 or toll free 877-214-6173) or on the Web (www.naturepreserves.ky.gov).

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